THE MENTOR

"A Wise and Faithful Guide and Friend"

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THE CONQUEST OF THE PEAKS

MONT BLANC
THE MATTERHORN
MOUNT ST. ELIAS

RUWENZORI
BRIDE PEAK
MOUNT McKINLEY

By CHARLES E. FAY, Litt. D.
First President of the American Alpine Club

TO most persons mountain climbing is but a sport. Our title suggests its more strenuous aspects; while the chosen list of illustrations emphasizes its relation to the exploration of "the uttermost parts of the earth." The adventurous alpinist is own brother to the seeker for the pole. The two are inspired by the same motives,—curiosity and the longing for achievement. Their fields are similar,—the lofty, snow-capped altitudes and the icy high latitudes,—and it is a significant fact that the latest and greatest accomplishments in mountaineering fall contemporaneously with the conquest of the poles.

Like other fields of exploration, "alpinism" has its early heroes. The Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge, alpinist and scholar, recently published a monumental work of a full thousand pages, in which are recorded the most notable climbs previous to the year 1600. In it the names of Antoine de Ville, who scaled the seemingly inaccessible Mont Aiguille in Dauphiné in the very year that Columbus discovered America, of Simler and Gesner in the sixteenth century, energetic Swiss scientists, lovers of the Alps and of their natural history, are rescued from oblivion; while the words that

SNOW CLIMBING
One of the two departments of the science of mountaineering.

they penned centuries ago, expressive of their enthusiasm over the vast and splendid prospects, the invigorating exercise, and even the moral uplift of the pure and serene upperworld, strike a responsive chord in the souls of those who have only casually visited it. Even Petrarch and Leonardo da Vinci are shown to have been of the number of those who attained to quite respectable altitudes; and no studious reader of Dante but realizes that he too must have known by actual experience the toils, if not the joys, of difficult crag-climbing.

FIRST ASCENT OF MONT BLANC

But it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that attention was more generally turned to mountaineering through the successful ascent of Mont Blanc. By whom and why was it undertaken?

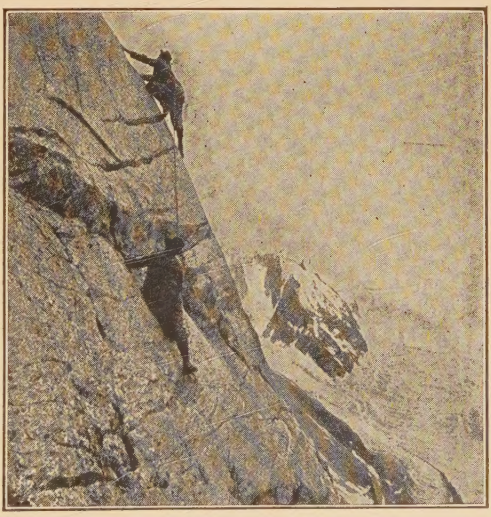
While the actual accomplishment was the performance of two dwellers at its base, the credit has usually been given, and not wholly unjustly, to the Genevan scientist, Professor Horace B. de Saussure. Even as a boy he had conceived a passion for the mountains, and from his earliest manhood that remote summit in the far horizon had teased his scientific mind. At the age of twenty (1760) he made the trip "afoot and alone" to its base, and left behind him the promise of a reward to anyone who should discover a way to the summit; but for fifteen years no effort was made to secure the prize. The first, in 1775, failed at the initial difficulties of the upper glaciers. A second, in 1783, attained somewhat higher; but the party returned quite disheartened.

But Jacques Balmat, a peasant youth then scarcely out of his teens, eager to earn the reward offered by De Saussure, only the day before this second failure had quietly undertaken to search out a route by himself. Uninvited he attached himself to this party of his rivals. Remaining behind when they turned back, if not indeed abandoned purposely by them, he kept on past the very steepest of the glaciers, making steps

with the point of his staff, and reached the top of the Rochers Rouges, beyond which the way is principally a long plodding over easier snow slopes. Darkness overtook him in his descent, and he passed the night on the edge of a crevasse, cheered by the thought that he had found a feasible way. Yet he kept his own counsel until three years later, when he communicated it to Dr. Paccard, the young physician of the place, whom he induced to accompany him. On the late afternoon of August 6th they quietly left the village (separately, to divert suspicion), then met and made a bivouac some 5,500 feet higher up. Soon after sunrise they were under way, threading the crevasses all day long, battling with the wind, and suffering from the cold and rarity of the air. When near the summit Paccard temporarily gave out; but Balmat pushed ahead and stood alone the first victor over the dangers and difficulties of the great White Mountain. Returning to his companion, he encouraged him also to keep on. The mystery of Mont Blanc was solved. A year later Balmat conducted De Saussure to the summit, and the man who had inspired the enterprise and had taken part in one futile attempt was able to enter into the joy of the great success.

WHAT MOUNTAINEERING MEANS

The science of mountaineering embraces two widely different fields,—snow climbing and rock climbing. The former conquers the difficulties of the ice world,—the yawning crevasse, the steep, avalanching slope, the dangerous cornice; its perils oftentimes hidden and the more insidious. The latter confronts the beetling precipice, follows the crumbling knife-edge (*arête*), or traverses past the shattered towers rising upon it, the obstructing *gens d'armes*. Each has its votaries, according to temperament. The latter, appealing more to the trained athlete, naturally developed later than the former. Most of the earlier ascents were preeminently snow climbs. As regards technical difficulties, the ascent of Mont Blanc is far less strenuous than that of the shattered "aiguilles," —the Charmoz, Dent de Requin, Dames Anglaises, Grépon, and others,—upon which it looks down so



ROCK CLIMBING

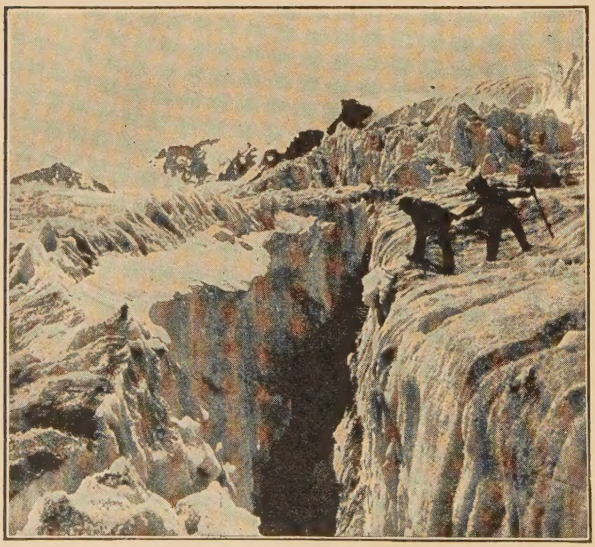
The department of mountaineering that requires great strength, courage, and a clear, steady head.

proudly. Such climbs as these well might have seemed impossible until after the ascent which, hardly second to that of Mont Blanc, appealed to the imagination of men,—the conquest of the Matterhorn in 1865.

During the three-quarters of a century that had passed since that first great event, alpinism under its stimulus had gone on gradually extending its propaganda among individuals and nationalities. Priests, scholars, and even princes yielded to the allurement of the heights. Though the English were even then preëminently a nation of travelers, very few of Anglo-Saxon blood are numbered among the pioneers of alpinism. But of the hundred new peaks scaled between 1842 and 1860 twenty-three yielded to Anglo-Saxon prowess, including the highest summit of Monte Rosa (second in altitude only to Mont Blanc), the Dom, Eiger, Grivola, and Aletschhorn. Meanwhile, in 1857, the original Alpine Club was formed in London.

FORCING THE MATTERHORN TO TERMS

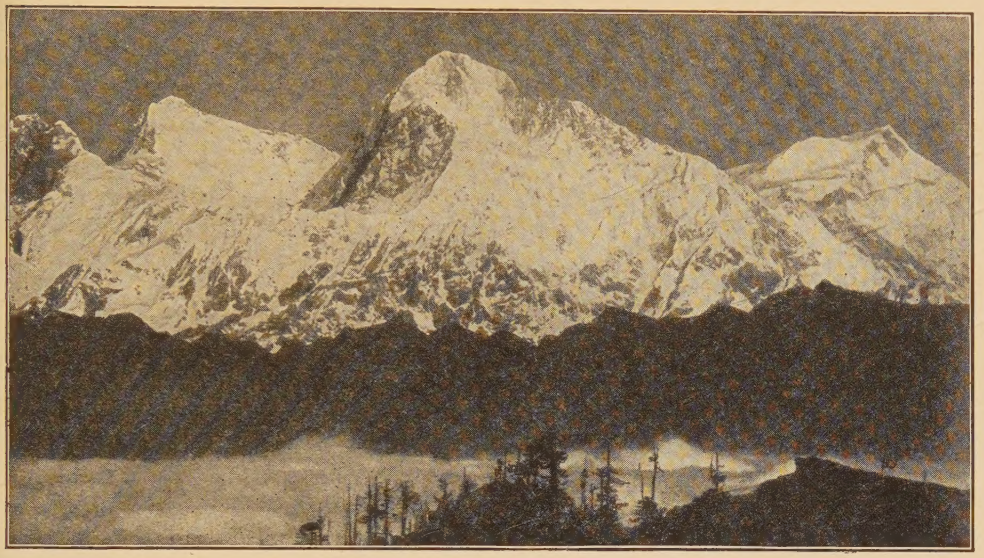
Between 1860 and 1865, out of eighty-five new peaks scaled, Anglo-Saxons vanquished forty-six, including the splendid galaxy of the Weisshorn, Lyskamm, Dent Blanche, Täschhorn, Dent d'Hérens, and Zinal Rothorn, among which the Matterhorn still rose virgin and seemingly inaccessible. Its splendid obelisk towered above Zermatt proudly and as a perpetual challenge. The eastern side in particular seemed almost vertical. The hardiest of those who ventured to assail the peak accorded no second glance to that apparent precipice. The Italian side looked less impossible, and it was here that all attempts were made previous to 1865. The first ones, by native hunters, occurred in 1858 and 1859; three others, by Englishmen, in 1860.



A CREVASSE

These great openings, where glaciers have ripped, are the most serious menace to the mountaineer crossing the ice fields.

In August, 1861, there appeared upon the scene the young engraver from London whose name is destined to live perhaps as long as those of the world's greatest explorers,—Edward Whymper. In his mountaineering classic,



MOUNT EVEREST

Believed to be one of the highest mountains in the world. 29,002 *feet high.*

"Scrambles Among the Alps," he tells the story of his seven fruitless attempts to reach the summit previous to 1865, always by the southwest ridge. By this time he had grown familiar with the mountain, and had discovered that the seeming verticality of its eastern face was largely an optical illusion. He became convinced that here lay the pathway to success, and with the courage of his convictions arranged his plan of campaign. Disastrously, as it proved, he joined forces with a group of his fellow-countrymen. One of these was unfortunately a novice. The route, save at a single point near the summit, proved astonishingly easy, particularly as compared with the ridge hitherto attempted. Passing the night of August 13th in a camp at the base of the obelisk, they set out at dawn, and at 1:40 they had attained the longed-for goal. The Matterhorn was conquered. But it took a grim vengeance upon the bold victors. At that only difficult point young Hadow slipped in his tracks, fell upon the chief guide, who was assisting him, and four of the party of seven plunged to their death. Only the parting of a weak rope saved Mr. Whymper and his two guides.

By the beginning of the '80's few even of the lesser crags of the Alps had been left unclimbed; but a new "playground of Europe" had been discovered in the Caucasus, where a dozen summits surpass the altitude of Mont Blanc. Members of the Alpine Club had made a preliminary visit in 1869, and even climbed one summit of Elburz (18,600

feet—some say 19,400), the giant of the range. In 1884 the work began in earnest, and within a decade nearly every summit of importance had been conquered.

This diversion to a remoter field gave a new impulse to alpinism as an auxiliary to exploration. In 1880 Mr. Whymper, still in his prime, proceeded to the Andes and conquered Chimborazo and the volcano of Cotopaxi. The ascent of the primate, Aconcagua (23,910 feet), was accomplished by Vines in 1897.

CONQUERING MOUNT ST. ELIAS

Two widely separated fields now invited attention,—subarctic Alaska and equatorial Africa. Various attempts had been made to scale the majestic Mount St. Elias (18,100 feet), rising from the desolate, icy solitudes at that time far beyond the verge of frontier civilization. A bold American scientist, Professor I. C. Russell, had twice essayed it, and with a skill and persistence worthy of the highest admiration had on the second occasion pushed his way beyond all the principal difficulties almost to the very goal. The completion of this undertaking stirred the ambition of the young duke of the Abruzzi, who during the seasons of 1892 and 1894 had accomplished the most difficult climbs in the Alps, including that of the Matterhorn by the Zmutt ridge. With four companions and five guides he reached the Alaskan coast on June 23, 1897; at noon of July 31st they raised the Italian flag on the summit of St. Elias, after nearly forty days of journeying over ice and snow. Their last camp on the way up was in the spot occupied by their bold predecessor, which they christened "Russell Col." Starting thence at midnight, they passed some five hours later the highest point reached by him. The remainder of the way offered no difficulty, beyond that caused by the rarity of the air. In ten days they covered the return to the coast.

An ascent that had been so nearly accomplished by an unskilled alpinist would scarcely be reckoned as a great achievement in mountain climbing; nor did the victors so rate it. Their principal hindrances were the numerous crevasses of the upper glacier and the bad weather. It savored more of arctic exploration than of mountaineering, and proved, indeed, a training school for the notable polar expedition undertaken two years later, in which the record for "farthest north" was won by Abruzzi and his able lieutenant, Cagni, one of his companions to Mount St. Elias.

A MOUNTAIN MYSTERY SOLVED

Almost upon the equator, far within the heart of Africa, rises one of the most interesting of all mountain ranges. Ptolemy, in the second century of our era, speaks of the "Mountains of the Moon" as the ultimate

MOUNT CHIMBORAZO

The famous beautiful mountain of Ecuador, 21,420 feet. Conquered in 1880 by Edward Whymper.

sources of the Nile; but in seventeen hundred years no civilized eye had seen them. Recent explorers had unconsciously been at their base; one had even looked upon their snows, but had disbelieved his senses. It was left for Stanley in 1888 really to rediscover and to christen Ruwenzori "the cloud-maker"—for it was the almost perpetual pall of mists that had obscured the heights from the sight of his predecessors. Several more or less successful expeditions had between 1900 and 1906 penetrated the misty wilderness that encompasses the range. To solve these mysteries, Abruzzi, after his usual careful preparations, set sail for Africa in the spring of 1906. The more arduous part of the expedition really began at Fort Portal, the last outpost of civilization, nine hundred miles from the coast. The trail through the Uganda forests, the crossing of swift streams, the reeking jungle and grotesque flora of the cold, rainy country at the immediate base of the peaks, and the comfortless camps, are told in detail in the printed account of the expedition. And then the story of

the victory, or rather series of victories; for Ruwenzori is really a group of six principal mountains, culminating in some twenty summits! Ten of these exceed Mont Blanc in height, the highest by seven hundred feet. Fourteen summits, including the highest, were reached by the leader of the expedition, the topography of the complex range was completely elucidated, the various peaks named, and a reliable map, as well as a large amount of scientific data, added to man's knowledge of the region. Here again it was the work of the explorer rather than the technical skill of the alpinist that we are called upon to admire.

But the next expedition, to try conclusions with the second highest peak on the globe, K2 or Godwin-Austen (28,250 feet) in Kashmir, was of a different nature. Other alpinists had visited the region, notably Sir Martin Conway, who in 1892 had attained success on Pioneer Peak (23,000 feet). In the early spring of 1909 Abruzzi and his companions set out for India, and two months later were at the foot of K2, at an altitude already 2,000 feet higher than Mont Blanc. More than 10,000 feet higher yet rose the sheer, snow-draped sides, a height, even under favorable circumstances, impossible to cover in one day. Therefore, one or more camping spots must be found, from the highest of which it would be feasible to reach the summit and return. The vast mountain was reconnoitered from every possible side. Lofty cols (saddles), one above 20,000 feet, were attained, only to find the outlook hopeless. After more than a month of persistent effort the enterprise was abandoned. Considering the ability of the party, this long but fruitless endeavor may be regarded as demonstrating the absolute inaccessibility of K2.

MOUNT ST. ELIAS
Ascended in 1897 by the Duke of the Abruzzi.

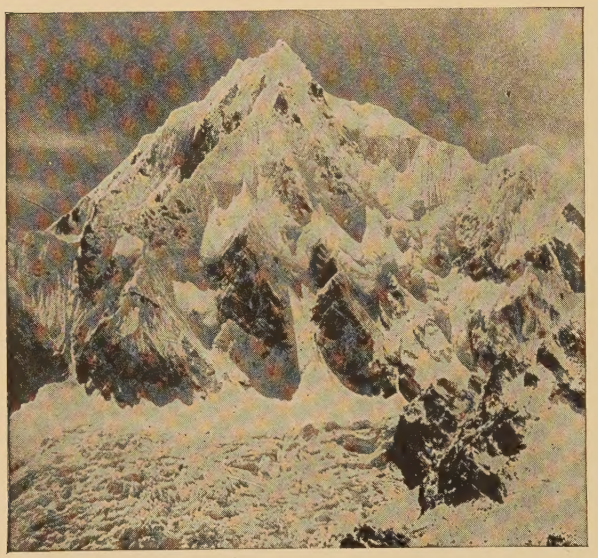
THE WORLD'S RECORD FOR ALTITUDE

Foiled in the principal object, an effort was now made to secure the world's record for height. The existing one had been made on Kabru (24,000 feet) in the Sikhim Himalayas, nearly a thousand miles farther east. They turned to Bride Peak

MOUNT RAINIER

From Mirror Lake; height, over 15,000 feet. The noblest peak of the Cascade Range, Washington.

near at hand, rising to 25,100 feet, or nearly a mile higher than the Chogolisa saddle, down to which its easterly ridge descends. Here was a fine location for a camp; but the difficult way to it lay over the icefall of a steeply descending glacier. When scaling this, a snowstorm caught the party and detained them for five days. Only at the end of the eighth day did they reach the saddle. The day following they carried their camp to 22,460 feet, from which an unsuccessful attempt was made to reach the summit. But the weather was in league with the peak and forced them back to the camp in the saddle, holding them prisoners for five days more. Conditions improving, they returned to the struggle and established a camp somewhat higher than before, at 22,500, the highest at which man has passed a night. At dawn of July 18th, with uncertain weather, they got under way. By eleven they had only ascended some 1,800 feet; but had already surpassed the record of Kabru. Physically in excellent condition, the abominable weather conditions were the sole obstacle to success,—hot, densely foggy, with the snow approaching avalanching conditions. Even thus they kept on, principally on rocks, until 2:30, when steep snow in a parlous state confronted them through the fog. Here, after waiting two hours for it to clear, they desisted; but they had carried the "man line" to 24,580 feet.



MOUNT SINIOLCHAM

One of the most beautiful peaks of the Himalayas.

The victories of 1912 were notable, and redound wholly to the credit of American alpinists. Mr. Coolidge, already referred to, is an American by birth; Dr. and Mrs. Workman hold records in the Himalayas; Miss Peck pluckily captured her elusive Andean peak. To their select number must be added the names of Miss Dora Keen and Messrs. Parker and Browne. The field in both instances was Alaska. Miss Keen's ascent of Mount Blackburn (16,400 feet) at her second trial, after a journey on glaciers for five weeks, is one of the most remarkable achievements in exploration by a woman, and ranks with the boldest by either sex. The attaining of the upper snows of Mount McKinley, the highest peak on the North American continent, by the Parker expedition was, if not completely successful, sufficiently so to render it hardly necessary for another party to encounter the great cost and hardship for the slight information that remains to be gathered. Neither expedition employed professional guides. Their omission speaks for the confidence of these amateur climbers, perhaps also for the somewhat less difficult work.

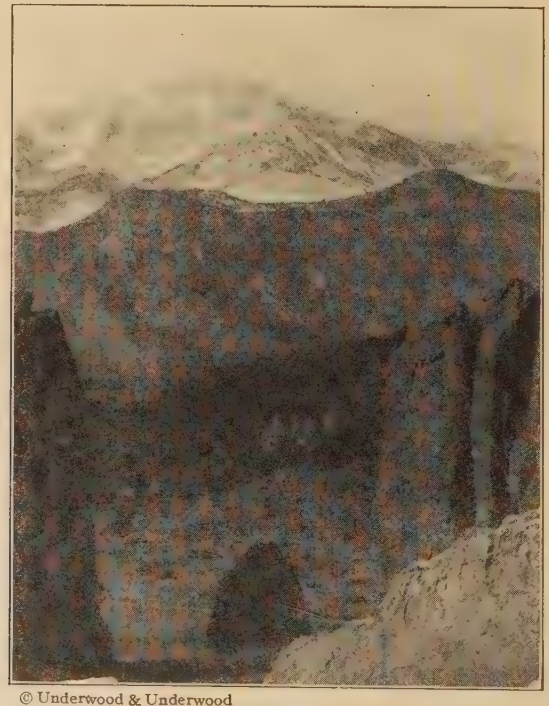
The story of the conquest of the great snow peaks offers little variety in details. That of McKinley is no exception, save as regards the season. All the others were summer journeys: this might pass for a midwinter one, in view of the start in February and the approach in early spring by dog-sled traveling, through an unexplored region deeply buried in snow, to the base of a 20,464 foot peak, lying near the Arctic Circle. It was June 16th before the actual ascent was fairly begun, and July 1st before the sturdy party desisted. The better part of a month was spent in forcing the way upward to camps from 11,000 to 17,150 feet above sea, detained by frequent storms, compelled to return for supplies, enduring severe cold. The final rebuff, with the goal within so easy grasp, under fair conditions, repeats the experiences of Russell on St. Elias and Abruzzi on Bride Peak. Messrs. Parker and Browne attained the highest altitude in America.

MOUNT ASSINIBOINE

Called the "Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies." Height, 11,860 feet. From a photograph by George and Mary M. Vaux.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Scrambles Among the Alps, 1860-1869	*Edward Whymper*
The Annals of Mont Blanc . . .	*C. E. Mathews*
The Playground of Europe . . .	*Leslie Stephen*
The Matterhorn	*Guido Rey*
The Exploration of the Caucasus .	*D. Freshfield and V. Sella*
The Ascent of Mount St. Elias . .	*F. De Filippi*
Ruwenzori	"
The Karakoram and Western Himalayas	"



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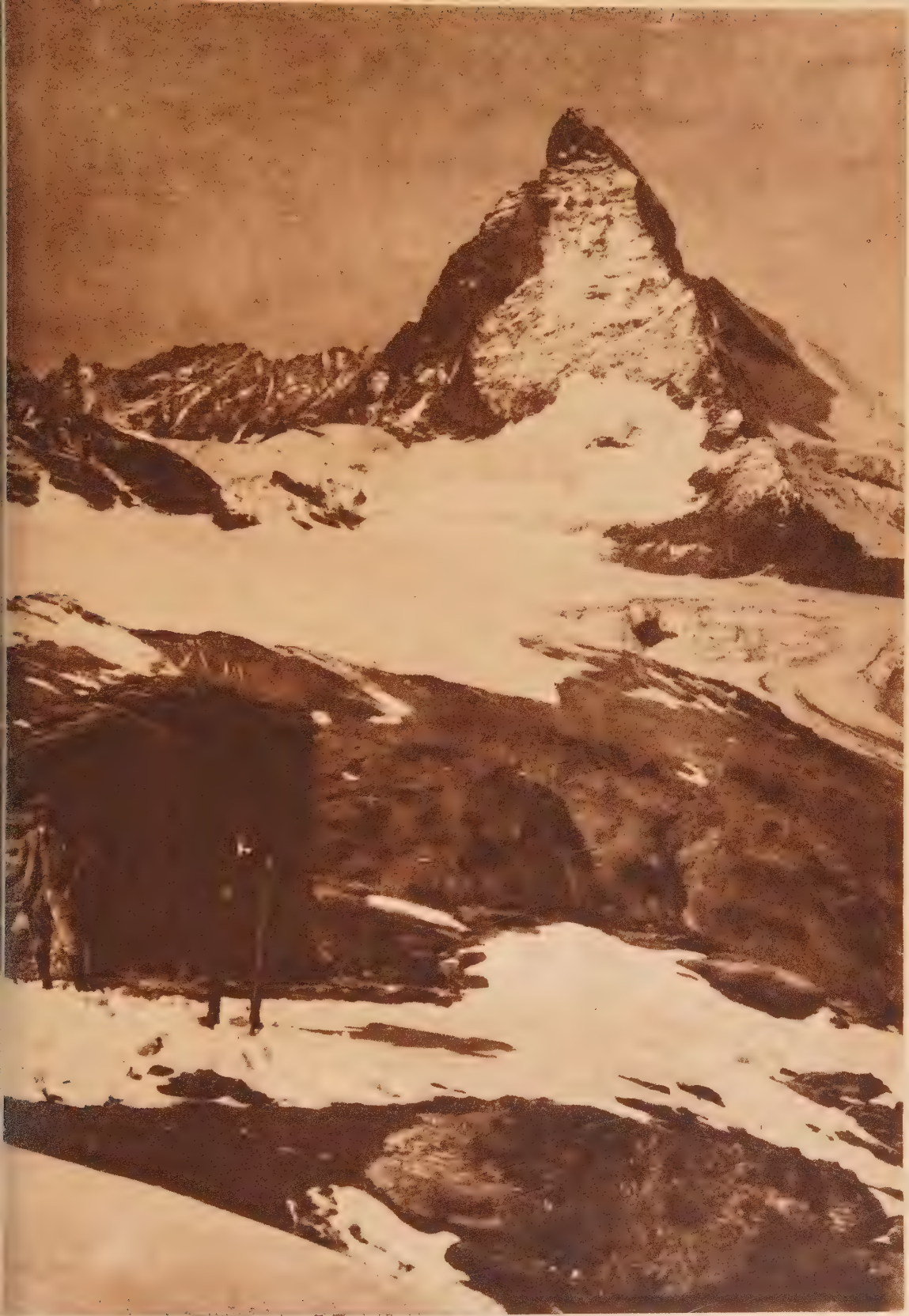
PIKES PEAK, COLORADO



THE MATTERHORN, ALPS